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ABSTRACT

With the recognition that a gap exists between the traditional doctoral programs in English which focus on literature and linguistics and the need for skills and methodology training (to teach poorly prepared undergraduate students), a study was conducted at the City University of New York (CUNY). This report contains the results of the study, data for which were obtained from questionnaires returned by 171 CUNY English teachers. An introduction lists the six objectives of the study and explains the study procedure; part two discusses the background and training of CUNY English teachers; part three contains teachers' opinions regarding students' problems in English (specifically reading, writing, speaking, and listening); part four provides information on the teaching methods and materials employed; part five consists of opinions regarding the improvement of training for CUNY English teachers; and part six includes a summary and recommendations. Six tables of findings illustrate the text. (JM)

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CITY UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEACHERS:

A SELF-REPORT

REGARDING REMEDIAL TEACHING

by

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CITY UNIVERSITY ENGLISH TEACHERS: A SELF-REPORT REGARDING REMEDIAL TEACHING

PART I

INTRODUCTION

For decades, graduate English departments have viewed English solely as the study of literature or linguistics and have prepared students for scholarship and research in these areas. On undergraduate levels, however, student interest in literature has waned, reading abilities have diminished, and colleges have admitted many underprepared students. English professors trained in traditional graduate specialities have had to deal with English as a skill, but few have had the training to do so. Needless to say, if colleges must focus on improving the literacy of undergraduate students, then college professors have no choice but to enlarge their vision of the province of English as a language skill as well as a literary art.

For the past twenty years, leaders in the National Council of Teachers of English, such as Albert Kitzhaber and Alfred Grommon, have consistently reported that instructors of college freshman English are inadequately prepared to teach the subject. More recently, at conferences on career development of the effective college teacher, jointly sponsored by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges (AAC), participants have recognized that one of their major problems is the need to improve the preparation of teachers in graduate schools. They agree that the

individual entering the profession "is shaped by the values held by the graduate school." If these findings are valid, then the Graduate School of the City University of New York (CUNY) and other graduate schools must decide wisely on their values, whether to foster limited traditional views or more inclusive ones. If the latter, graduate schools must move quickly to close the gap that now exists between traditional doctoral programs in English and the realities of the open-door college where most of their graduates are likely to teach. Policy makers at graduate schools may well ponder the question raised in 1971 at the conference of the Career Development of the Effective College Teacher: "What magnitude of scholarship disconnected from teaching can be justifiably supported by American higher education?"

Open admissions is a primary mission of CUNY. Therefore, the Graduate School of CUNY should be a leader in finding ways to bridge the gap that now exists between traditional doctoral programs in English and the need for skills and methodology training. Because the Professional Staff Congress (the faculty union of CUNY) wished to exert leadership in the improvement of college teaching in CUNY, it urged the administration to develop new doctoral programs. As a result, an ad hoc committee was established in 1974 by the President of the Graduate School and University Center of CUNY, in conjunction with the Chancellor, to study the background and professional training of college English teachers in CUNY and to obtain their opinions on related matters. With this committee's report, it is expected that the faculty of the Graduate School and University Center of CUNY may intelligently

consider the problems and design post-baccalaureate programs in English for teachers of underprepared students. With this purpose in mind, the present study was undertaken.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To obtain information regarding the background and professional training of English teachers in CUNY.

2. To discover on what basis they felt qualified or not qualified to teach remedial English courses.

3. To discover what they believed to be the students' major problems.

4. To discover what methods and materials they employed in their teaching.

5. To seek their advice on what courses and training should be offered to college English teachers.

6. To make recommendations for the improvement of the training and continuing education of CUNY English teachers.

Procedures

To obtain data needed to accomplish the above objectives, the investigators prepared a questionnaire and sent it to 360 English teachers in 18 colleges of CUNY, selected at random from English and Basic Skills Departments. The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter stating the nature and purpose of the study and inviting teachers' participation.

Data presented in this study are based on 171 returns

(47.5%), which represent a cross-section of teaching ranks from adjuncts to full professors. Where the totals cited for specific questions differ from the total of returns the difference occurs because some questions were answered erroneously or incompletely.

PART II

THE BACKGROUND AND TRAINING OF CITY UNIVERSITY TEACHERS OF COLLEGE ENGLISH

Background Information

Sex, Department, College

This study was concerned with 171 college teachers who responded to a mailed questionnaire: 73 (42.7%) male, 91 (52.2%) female, and 7 (4.1%) who did not indicate their sex. Of these, 19 (11.1%) were adjuncts, 31 (18.1%) lecturers, 34 (19.9%) instructors, 59 (34.5%) assistant professors, 14 (8.2%) associate professors, 7 (4.1%) professors, and 7 (4.1%) did not respond. Of the 171 teachers, 110 (64.3%) were assigned to Departments of English, 59 (34.5%) to Basic Skills or equivalent departments, and 2 (1.2%) did not respond. Respondents were about equally divided between senior and community colleges: 91 (53.3%) from the ten senior colleges and 80 (46.7%) from the eight community colleges.

Teaching Experience

The range of the teachers' previous experience in teaching college English varied from 0 - 44 years; the range of the respondents' experience in teaching remedial English at his or her present college varied from 0 - 11; a large number, 80 (46.7%), of these teachers were beginning teachers of college English; although tenure status of the respondents was not surveyed, it is probable that the majority of remedial teachers are also beginning or non-tenured faculty (Tables 1 and 2).

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TABLE 1

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
IN
TEACHING COLLEGE ENGLISH

Years	Number of Teachers	Percent
0	9	5.2
1	7	4.1
2	8	4.7
3	23	13.5
4	20	11.7
5	13	7.6
6	10	5.8
7	10	5.8
8	17	9.9
9	6	3.5
10	9	5.2
11	6	3.5
12	4	2.3
13	2	1.2
14	1	0.6
15	2	1.2
18	2	1.2
19	2	1.2
20	2	1.2
21	1	0.6
22	1	0.6
23	1	0.6
25	1	0.6
31	1	0.6
44	1	0.6
Did Not Respond	12	7.0
Total	171	100.0

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TABLE 2

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
IN
TEACHING REMEDIAL ENGLISH

Years	Number of Teachers	Percent
0	20	11.7
1	10	5.8
2	20	11.7
3	21	12.2
4	30	17.5
5	15	8.8
6	12	7.0
7	8	4.7
8	8	4.7
9	4	2.3
10	3	1.8
11	1	0.6
14	1	0.6
15	1	0.6
16	1	0.6
17	2	1.2
20	2	1.2
22	1	0.6
44	1	0.6
Did Not Respond	10	5.8
Total	171	100.0

Over half of these teachers, 97 (56.7%), indicated that their primary function was the teaching of remedial English.

Professional Training

The majority of these teachers, 124 (72.5%), had an undergraduate major in English; 19 (11.1%) had an undergraduate minor in English; 17 (9.9%) had neither an English major nor minor; and 11 (6.4%) did not respond.

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Of the 171 respondents, 152 (88.9%) indicated they have an M.A. or M.S. degree: 92 (53.8%) majored in English; 6 (3.5%) majored in English as a Second Language; 26 (15.2%) majored in other areas and 19 (11.1%) did not indicate they have a master's degree (Table 3).

TABLE 3

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF CUNY COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS

Masters' Degrees

Degrees	Number of Respondents	Percent
M.A. in English	92	53.8
M.A. in English as a Second Language	6	3.5
M.S. in Education	26	15.2
Masters' Degree in Other Fields	28	16.4
Did Not Indicate They Have a Master's Degree	19	11.1
Total	171	100.0

Of the 171 respondents, 55 (32.1%) indicated they have a Ph.D. or an Ed.D.: 39 (22.8%) majored in English; 5 (2.9%) majored in Education; 11 (6.4%) majored in other areas and 116 (67.8%) did not indicate they have a doctoral degree (Table 4).

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TABLE 4

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF CUNY COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS

Doctoral Degrees

Degrees	Number of Respondents	Percent*
Ph.D. in English	39	22.8
Ed.D.	5	2.9
Doctorate in Other Areas	11	6.4
Did Not Indicate They Have a Doctoral Degree	116	67.8
Total	171	99.9

*Percentages may not equal 100% because of rounding-off and/or because of non-respondents.

In response to the question "If you do not have an M.A. or Ph.D., are you interested in obtaining one?" 5 (2.9%) indicated they were interested in obtaining an M.A., and 83 (48.5%) indicated they were interested in obtaining a Ph.D.

Opinions Regarding Preparation to Teach Remedial English

In response to the question, "Do you feel you received proper training in English to teach remedial English?" of the 166 teachers who answered the question, 43 (25.1%) checked "yes," 40 (23.4%) checked "somewhat," and 83 (48.5%) checked "no."

Respondents to this question were then grouped according to undergraduate majors in English, of which there were 124. In this group 25 (20.2%) checked "yes," 27 (21.8%) checked "somewhat,"

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69 (55.6%) checked "no," and 3 (2.4%) did not respond (Table 5).

They were also grouped according to undergraduate minors in English, of which there were 19. In this group 6 (31.6%) checked "yes" to the above question about receiving proper training, 6 (31.6%) checked "somewhat," 6 (31.6%) checked "no," and 1 (5.3%) did not respond (Table 5).

TABLE 5

OPINIONS REGARDING ADEQUACY OF PREPARATION TO TEACH REMEDIAL ENGLISH

Grouped According to Major and Minor in English

	Yes	Somewhat	No	Did Not Respond
124 Majors	25 (20.2%)	27 (21.8%)	69 (55.6%)	3 (2.4%)
19 Minors	6 (31.6%)	6 (31.6%)	6 (31.6%)	1 (5.3%)*

*Percentages may not equal 100% because of rounding-off and/or because of non-respondents.

Of those who indicated "yes" and "somewhat" to the above question about receiving proper training, the majority of the respondents gave "experience" as the major reason for believing they were prepared to teach remedial English. Other reasons stated, in order of frequency, were "having a specialization in reading," "teaching and taking courses in English as a Second Language (ESL)," and "taking a course in applied linguistics."

Of those who indicated "no" to the question about receiving proper training, the major reasons cited for not being prepared were "no formal training in teaching remedial English," and "no courses in

linguistics, reading, ESL, and teaching writing."

It should be noted that as a result of phone calls and inquiries received by the investigators regarding the confidentiality of this questionnaire, it was learned that some teachers were concerned about answering this question truthfully for fear of losing their jobs if they acknowledged their lack of training to teach remedial English. Assurances were given to the respondents that their names would be kept confidential.

PART III

OPINIONS REGARDING STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH

In order to discover what major problems teachers believed students have in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, a list of possible student problems, under each of the language arts skills, was prepared. Teachers were asked to check those they felt were major problems and to add any additional ones not listed. For each skill category, respondents indicated students' major problems on the check-list, or in their own additions, in the following order of frequency:

In Reading

1. Inadequate vocabulary
2. Inability to grasp central idea
3. Inability to grasp supporting ideas
4. Inability to understand the mood or tone in literature
5. Inability to concentrate
6. Lack of interest in reading

In Writing

1. Inability to organize
2. Poor diction
3. Commitment of gross errors in grammar
4. Inadequate knowledge of punctuation and mechanics
5. Inability to spell
6. Insufficient ideas
7. Lack of confidence

In Speaking

1. Impoverished vocabulary
2. Repetition of phrases and expressions
3. Lack of fluency in oral expression
4. Speaking in elliptical units
5. Poor enunciation
6. Lack of confidence

In Listening

1. Inability to select important details from what they hear
2. Inability to grasp gist of lectures
3. Short attention span
4. Lack of interest

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PART IV

TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS EMPLOYED

In response to the question "What teaching methods do you use?" the majority indicated they primarily employed the discussion method (Table 6).

TABLE 6

METHODS EMPLOYED IN TEACHING COLLEGE ENGLISH

Methods	Very Often		Often		Sometimes		Seldom		Never		Did Not Respond	
	#	%*	#	%*	#	%*	#	%*	#	%*	#	%*
Lecture	10	5.8	24	14.0	64	37.4	42	24.6	16	9.4	15	8.8
Discussion	95	55.6	55	32.2	14	8.2	1	0.6	--	----	6	3.5
Programmed Instruction	7	4.1	18	10.5	37	21.6	37	21.6	41	24.0	31	18.1
Television	--	----	1	0.6	21	12.3	29	17.0	83	48.5	37	21.6
Team Teaching	4	2.3	9	5.3	46	26.9	22	12.9	59	34.5	31	18.1
Audio-Visual	6	3.5	25	14.6	59	34.5	33	19.3	19	11.1	29	17.0

*Percentages may not equal 100% because of rounding-off and/or because of non-respondents.

Methods and Materials Found to be Most Effective for Remedial Students

Although "discussion" was the primary method employed in all college English classes, it was not noted as "especially effective" for remedial students. In response to the request, "Please describe any methods and materials that you have found to be especially effective in helping remedial students," major items noted were as

follows: 45 (26.4%) said "interpersonal and group communication," 26 (15.2%) said "individual conferences," and 26 (15.2%) said "writing practice." Other suggestions ranged from programmed materials to audio visual materials to the classics.

Methods and Materials Found to be Least Effective for Remedial Students

In response to the question, "What methods and materials have you found to be least effective?" major items noted were as follows: 33 (19.3%) said "lectures," 26 (15.2%) said "formal textbooks," and 13 (7.6%) said "exercises with no application."

PART V

IMPROVEMENT OF TRAINING FOR CITY UNIVERSITY TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Opinions Regarding Courses Teachers Would Find Beneficial

In response to the request "Please indicate which of the following courses English teachers would find highly beneficial in order to teach remedial English students," the respondents indicated the following, which are listed in order of frequency checked:

1. Corrective and Remedial Teaching
2. Approaches to Teaching Grammar
3. Teaching English to Foreign Students
4. Teaching Reading to High School and College Students
5. Applied Linguistics
6. Methods of Teaching English and Literature
7. Advanced Composition
8. History of the English Language

Opinions Regarding Necessary Training

In attempting to discover what teachers regard as necessary for the training of college English teachers, the investigators asked the respondents to react to certain statements in terms ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." As indicated below, the majority agreed with all three of the following statements:

1. "Trainees should spend time observing and acting as interns prior to teaching."

   101 (59.1%) strongly agreed; 48 (28.1%) agreed;
   12 (7.0%) disagreed; 1 (0.6%) strongly disagreed.

2. "In-service training for remedial English teachers is needed."

   102 (59.6%) strongly agreed; 44 (25.7%) agreed
   15 (8.8%) disagreed; 0 strongly disagreed.

3. "Further, the University should make an in-service training program available to all interested English teachers."

   113 (66.1%) strongly agreed; 39 (22.8%) agreed;
   6 (3.5%) disagreed: 1 (0.6%) strongly disagreed.

In response to the statement, "If in-service training for teaching English to open admissions students were initiated, the following areas should receive immediate priority," the majority of respondents indicated the following areas listed in order of frequency:

1. Corrective and Remedial Teaching
2. Grammar
3. English as a Second Language
4. Reading
5. Applied Linguistics

Other suggestions ranged from "teaching methods workshops" to "punctuation problems."

In response to the statement, "The CUNY Graduate School and University Center might assist English teachers by offering the following services/training/programs," the majority of respondents indicated in one form or another, "sessions, programs, or courses" that would assist them in learning more about corrective and remedial teaching.

PART VI

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study of "City University English Teachers: A Self-Report Regarding Remedial Teaching" was made in order to obtain information to enable the Graduate School and University Center of CUNY to plan relevant post-baccalaureate training programs for those who will teach open admissions students.

In summary, the data reflected that a majority of English teachers responding feel unprepared to teach remedial English courses and that post-baccalaureate programs should be developed. These programs should offer certain specified instruction if they are to be effective in training remedial English teachers. Undoubtedly there are many factors contributing to a teacher's feeling of inadequacy and many considerations in planning post-baccalaureate programs which have not been surveyed. This study has dealt only with a limited number of factors; however, these items prove to be important and must be considered if progress in college-teacher preparation is to be made.

Within the limits of these data, the investigators made the following findings:

1. Although there is a wide range of teaching experience among the responding teachers, the majority of them are beginning or non-tenured teachers.

2. Also, the primary function of these teachers is the teaching of remedial English.

3. A majority of these teachers had a Master's Degree and

slightly more than half had majored in English; a minority had a doctorate and approximately one fourth of this minority had majored in English.

4. Approximately one-half of the teachers involved in this study expressed an interest in obtaining a Ph.D.

5. Approximately one-half of the teachers said they did not receive the proper training in English to teach remedial English, and of those who felt prepared, the majority gave "experience" as the major reason for feeling they were prepared.

6. A majority of teachers felt the students' major problems were, in reading: inadequate vocabulary, inability to grasp the central idea, inability to grasp supporting ideas, and inability to understand the mood or tone in literature; in writing: inability to organize, poor diction, commitment of gross errors in grammar, and inadequate knowledge of punctuation and mechanics; in speaking: impoverished vocabulary; in listening: inability to select important details from oral statements.

7. The teaching method primarily employed by the teachers is the discussion method, but for remedial students, the "interpersonal and group communication" method was considered most effective.

8. Courses listed by a majority of the teachers as most beneficial for training in remedial English instruction were as follows: Corrective and Remedial Teaching, Approaches to Teaching Grammar, Teaching English to Foreign Students, Teaching Reading to High School and College Students, and Applied Linguistics.

9. The majority of the teachers believed the following: trainees should spend time observing and acting as interns prior to teaching; in-service training for remedial English teachers is needed; and the University should make an in-service training program available to all interested English teachers.

10. They believed the following in-service training areas should receive priority: corrective and remedial teaching, grammar, English as a second language, reading, and applied linguistics.

11. The majority of the teachers believed the CUNY Graduate School and University Center should assist English teachers by offering "sessions, programs, or courses" dealing with corrective and remedial teaching.

In light of the above findings, the investigators believe that graduate programs in English should include preparation for open admissions college teaching. The investigators agree that the Graduate School continue to train scholars in literary research in order to extend the boundaries of knowledge. They recommend, however, that the Graduate School also develop programs in English which include practical courses for teachers. Their specific recommendations are:

1. that graduate programs in English be designed to include courses in Corrective and Remedial Teaching, Approaches to Teaching Grammar, Teaching English as a Second Language, Teaching Reading and Composition to Freshmen, and Applied Linguistics;

2. that graduate programs in English recognize the importance of a candidate's responsibilities as a teacher of freshman English, provide him with some supervised experience in teaching freshman or

remedial English, and offer him an opportunity to participate in teaching seminars;

3. that in-service training sessions for practicing English teachers of underprepared students be initiated by the Graduate School and University Center so that teachers may receive help on how to diagnose and correct linguistic problems of their students;

4. that the Graduate School and University Center gather and disseminate information about teaching practices within and outside the University;

5. that a new doctoral program or track in English be designed for teachers whose primary assignment is remedial English;

6. that a special conference be called of community and senior college personnel to explore the problems of college teacher preparation. More specifically, a meeting of remedial English specialists, chairmen or directors of English programs, English-Education specialists, deans of instruction and graduate faculties be gathered to discuss the findings and recommendations of this report;

7. and that final recommendations by the investigators and conference members be developed for a doctoral program to prepare teachers in remedial English education.

The findings and recommendations of this study are not meant to be final. Rather, they are meant to serve as a basis for discussion among those members of the CUNY community who are concerned with the improvement of graduate English education. In this phase of open admissions, scrutiny of our programs and self-criticism is especially appropriate, for we can no longer afford to ignore the needs

expressed by teachers in remedial English programs at the University. If open admissions is to succeed, students must have teachers who are adequately prepared to deal with their special problems.